



# House of Representatives

General Assembly

**File No. 321**

February Session, 2012

House Bill No. 5497

*House of Representatives, April 10, 2012*

The Committee on Public Health reported through REP. RITTER, E. of the 38th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the bill ought to pass.

**AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE  
LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS  
COMMITTEE CONCERNING THE REGULATION OF HEARING  
INSTRUMENT SPECIALISTS AND AUDIOLOGISTS.**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Section 20-398 of the general statutes is repealed and the  
2 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2012*):

3 (a) No person may engage in the practice of fitting or selling hearing  
4 aids, or display a sign or in any other way advertise or claim to be a  
5 person who sells or engages in the practice of fitting or selling hearing  
6 aids unless such person has obtained a license under this chapter or as  
7 an audiologist under sections 20-395a to 20-395g, inclusive. [No  
8 audiologist, other than an audiologist who is a licensed hearing  
9 instrument specialist on and after July 1, 1996, shall engage in the  
10 practice of fitting or selling hearing aids until such audiologist has  
11 presented satisfactory evidence to the commissioner that the  
12 audiologist has (1) completed at least six semester hours of coursework

13 regarding the selection and fitting of hearing aids and eighty hours of  
14 supervised clinical experience with children and adults in the selection  
15 and fitting of hearing aids at an institution of higher education in a  
16 program accredited, at the time of the audiologist's completion of  
17 coursework and clinical experience, by the American Speech-  
18 Language-Hearing Association or such successor organization as may  
19 be approved by the department, or (2) has satisfactorily passed the  
20 written section of the examination required by this section for licensure  
21 as a hearing instrument specialist.] No person may receive a license,  
22 except as provided in subsection (b) of this section, unless such person  
23 has submitted proof satisfactory to the department that such person  
24 has completed a four-year course at an approved high school or has an  
25 equivalent education as determined by the department; has  
26 satisfactorily completed a course of study in the fitting and selling of  
27 hearing aids or a period of training approved by the department; and  
28 has satisfactorily passed a written, oral and practical examination  
29 given by the department. Application for the examination shall be on  
30 forms prescribed and furnished by the department. Examinations shall  
31 be given at least twice yearly. The fee for the examination shall be two  
32 hundred dollars; and for the initial license and each renewal thereof  
33 shall be two hundred fifty dollars.

34 (b) Nothing in this chapter shall prohibit a corporation, partnership,  
35 trust, association or other like organization maintaining an established  
36 business address from engaging in the business of selling or offering  
37 for sale hearing aids at retail, provided such organization employs  
38 only persons licensed, in accordance with the provisions of this  
39 chapter or as audiologists under sections 20-395a to 20-395g, inclusive,  
40 in the direct sale and fitting of such products.

41 (c) Nothing in this chapter shall prohibit a hearing instrument  
42 specialist licensed under this chapter from making impressions for  
43 earmolds or a physician licensed in this state or an audiologist licensed  
44 under the provisions of sections 20-395a to 20-395g, inclusive, from  
45 making impressions for earmolds in the course of such person's clinical  
46 practice.

47 Sec. 2. Section 20-402 of the general statutes is repealed and the  
48 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2012*):

49 (a) Licenses issued under this chapter shall be renewed once every  
50 two years, in accordance with the provisions of section 19a-88, on  
51 payment of the renewal fee of two hundred dollars to the department  
52 and on production of evidence of satisfactory completion of continuing  
53 education requirements established by the Commissioner of Public  
54 Health, in accordance with subsection (b) of this section.

55 (b) On and after October 1, 2014, each licensee shall be required to  
56 complete a minimum of sixteen hours of continuing education prior to  
57 being issued the renewal of his or her license under this chapter. Such  
58 continuing education shall consist of courses offered or approved by  
59 the National Board of Certification in Hearing Instrument Sciences, the  
60 American Academy of Audiology or the American Speech-Language  
61 Hearing Association or such successor organizations as may be  
62 approved by the Commissioner of Public Health.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	October 1, 2012	20-398
Sec. 2	October 1, 2012	20-402

Section 1	October 1, 2012	20-398
Sec. 2	October 1, 2012	20-402

**PRI** Joint Favorable C/R

PH

**PH** Joint Favorable

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

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***OFA Fiscal Note***

***State Impact:*** None

***Municipal Impact:*** None

***Explanation***

There is no fiscal impact to the Department of Public Health (DPH) associated with allowing licensed audiologists to fit or sell hearing aids without obtaining additional licensures or having to meet additional education and training requirements as this is current DPH practice.

***The Out Years***

***State Impact:*** None

***Municipal Impact:*** None

**OLR Bill Analysis****HB 5497*****AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE CONCERNING THE REGULATION OF HEARING INSTRUMENT SPECIALISTS AND AUDIOLOGISTS.*****SUMMARY:**

This bill allows a licensed audiologist to fit or sell hearing aids without (1) obtaining additional licensure as a hearing instrument specialist (previously called “hearing aid dealer”) or (2) completing additional educational and training requirements. Existing law already includes the fitting or selling of hearing aids within an audiologist’s scope of practice (CGS § 20-395a (10)). Audiologists receive training in this function as part of their doctoral degree education and supervised postgraduate work experience.

Starting October 1, 2014, the bill requires a hearing instrument specialist to complete at least 16 hours of continuing education before the Department of Public Health (DPH) renews his or her biennial license. The continuing education must include courses offered or approved by the National Board of Certification in Hearing Instrument Sciences, American Academy of Audiology, American Speech-Language Hearing Association, or any DPH-approved successor organizations. Current law does not require continuing education as a condition of licensure renewal.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2012

**AUDIOLOGIST REQUIREMENTS FOR FITTING AND SELLING HEARING AIDS**

The bill removes the statutory requirement that an audiologist who fits or sells hearing aids:

1. obtain additional licensure as a hearing instrument specialist;
2. provide DPH with evidence showing satisfactory completion of
  - (a) at least six semester hours of coursework in selecting and fitting hearing aids and
  - (b) 80 hours of supervised clinical experience with children and adults in selecting and fitting hearing aids at a program accredited by American Speech Language-Hearing Association, or its successor; or
3. pass the hearing instrument specialist written licensure exam.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Hearing Instrument Specialists***

A hearing instrument specialist fits and sells hearing aids to individuals in retail establishments. To become licensed, the law requires an applicant to (1) complete a four-year high school course or its equivalent; (2) complete a DPH-approved study course or period in fitting and selling hearing aids; and (3) pass a written, oral, and practical exam (CGS § 20-398(a)).

## **COMMITTEE ACTION**

Program Review and Investigations Committee

Joint Favorable Change of Reference

Yea    10        Nay    0        (03/16/2012)

Public Health Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea    24        Nay    0        (03/23/2012)